

throughout my visit. It was the particular focus of discussions during my stay in Colombia.

I found a good deal of pessimism about the prospects for Contadora, along with evidence that tensions are increasing. A key factor in this bleak prognosis is the absence of a mutually acceptable basis for understanding between Nicaragua and the USA, despite stated objectives on both sides to seek a modus vivendi.

Earlier this year, the Contadora countries established three commissions to address economic, political and security problems -- the latter dealing with key issues of force levels, verification and demilitarization. During the visit to Ottawa by Foreign Minister Lloreda of Colombia in February, I indicated that Canada would be pleased to collaborate with the work of these commissions in any way which Contadora Ministers might find constructive and appropriate. Although enthusiasm was expressed in several capitals about this offer, there has not as yet been any practical follow through. The commissions have now reported to Contadora and Central American foreign ministers. However, this work goes on and the Canadian offer stands.

Although the obstacles are enormous and the basis for pessimism about its future only too real, I continue to believe that Contadora represents the only international instrument with the potential for reconciliation in Central America. The political leaders with whom I spoke in Colombia, in Central America, and indeed the Mexican President and Foreign Minister in Ottawa earlier this week, are all conscious that the failure of Contadora could lead to a massive and escalating tragedy.

Moreover, there are Contadora achievements. If the present situation is discouraging, it would have been much worse without Contadora. The process has brought the five countries of Central America together for regular discussions. It has taken the heat out of some tensions, if not actually prevented the outbreak of war between Nicaragua and Honduras.

As I have said, we strongly support Contadora, but we are also aware of the temptation to hide behind public statements of support for Contadora without addressing ourselves to the problems which are frustrating the Contadora process. It is my view that more pressure should be applied by the international community, in support of Contadora, to have the forces and military support of third parties removed from Central America. Contadora is vital and if it is to work, it must have the genuine support of all parties.

There were, of course, questions about the Canadian position with respect to U.S. policies in Central America. I explained that there were differences with the United States and that these had been raised in my regular consultation with